



Choices for healthy living • nutrition • fitness • well-being • health



3 TIPS to Lessen Holiday Stress

The December holiday season can be stressful for almost anyone. For some, the thought of shopping for gifts and food and planning the holiday meal can be too much.

Here are a few tips to help you get through the season smoothly and happily:

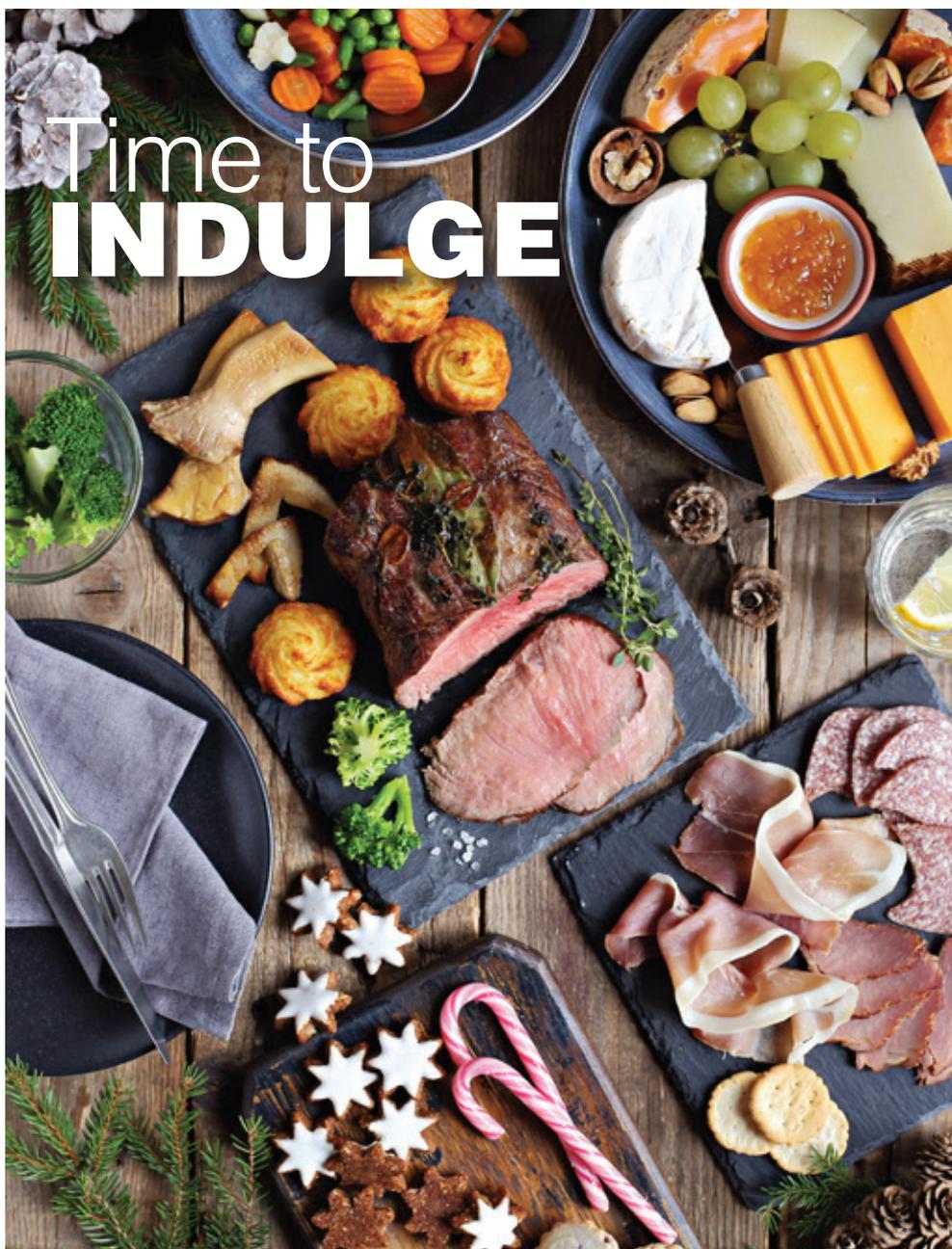
1. Consider devoting one day to shopping, whether you head to the mall first thing in the morning or set aside a chunk of time for online searching. Think about doing this early in December when the selection of gifts may be much better and to allow time for shipping items to distant friends and relatives.
2. How you shop can be as important as what you buy. Perhaps you find a perfect item for a friend, but would also like to get it for a family

member. If those friends and family are not in the same social circle, it just might be the solution to get several items that are the same—in different colours, perhaps—and disperse them throughout your wider social network.

3. Consider giving a treat to yourself during this busy time. It doesn't have to be an expensive gift for yourself—maybe it's a small box of high-quality chocolate, or a whimsical pair of socks. The point is to think of yourself every so often. Psychologist Alice Doma, director of the Mind/Body Center for Women's Health at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School, suggests setting a goal. For example, for every 10 presents, reward yourself with something just for you.

10 FAST FACTS

- 1 Underwater swimming is the only time you should hold your breath when exercising.
- 2 Walking at a brisk pace can burn almost as many calories as jogging.
- 3 You can't target fat loss: fat loss is systemic.
- 4 According to one study, people on average go to the gym twice a week.
- 5 Your brain can remember more than 50,000 different scents.
- 6 The skin of a kiwi is edible and loaded with fibre and vitamin C.
- 7 Cinnamon can enhance the delivery of nutrients to your muscles.
- 8 Almost one per cent of the population of the Western world is gluten intolerant.
- 9 Ginger can reduce post-workout muscle pain by up to 25 per cent.
- 10 Turkey, fish and cheese have the highest protein-to-calorie ratio.



Time to INDULGE

Have your cake and eat it, too, this holiday season by consistently applying these three strategies:

1. Less is more! It's very easy to overload plates with the abundance available at this time of year. Instead, try using a smaller plate to automatically reduce the portion size. This allows for enjoying a few bites of everything without that heavy, overfull feeling that can happen all too easily.

2. Out of sight, out of mind! Keep holiday treats in the pantry or tucked away instead of out where they're highly visible. If in view, they're way too easy to grab and eat. Try keeping a bowl of washed fresh fruit like apples, oranges and in-season pomegranate at the ready in the fridge.

3. Be mindful! Don't refrain entirely from enjoying the higher fat and higher sugar holiday goodies, but savour them slowly and with mindful attention. This proven strategy results in eating less.



winter recipe

Roasted **Winter Veggies** and **Quinoa Salad**

Serves: 4

A healthy, flavourful salad starring the vegetables of the season!

INGREDIENTS

Salad:

- ½ medium butternut squash
- 1 ½ cups Brussels sprouts
- 1 ½ cups beets
- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 1 ¼ cups kale
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Toasted sunflower seeds (optional)

Dressing:

- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 200° C/400° F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Peel and chop the butternut squash and beets into half-inch pieces. Trim the Brussels sprouts and also chop into half-inch pieces. Arrange in an even layer on baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes or until cooked through and golden brown. Let cool.
- Make dressing: whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar and Dijon mustard.
- Wash, de-stem and roughly chop the kale. Drizzle with dressing, add the roasted vegetables and quinoa and toss well.

Serve immediately.

Optional: Top with toasted sunflower seeds.

“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.”

—Jim Rohn, author

Look Beyond Dairy for Calcium Sources

Dairy products aren't the only source of dietary calcium. There are many other sources you may not be aware of, suggests Eve Lees, a Vancouver-based nutrition coach.

For example, poppy seeds provide much more calcium than other seeds: 126 mg in one tablespoon. Lees suggests adding them whole or ground to any dish; sprinkle on fresh fruit, mix into yogurt, cook them into your whole grains or add to soups and salads.

Poppy seeds are also rich in fibre, iron and many other nutrients. Alternate poppy seeds with other seeds you are using, such as flax, sesame, chia, or hemp.



Have a different one each day. They are all excellent choices, each with their own unique health-boosting properties.

Celery seed (not celery salt) is another little-known calcium contributor. One tablespoon offers 115 mg of calcium. Add to soups or cooked grains. Other overlooked calcium sources include six figs (115 mg), one cup cooked collard greens (350 mg),

and one tablespoon blackstrap molasses (200 mg). Molasses is left after refining sugarcane or sugar beets into sugar. Try mixing some into a glass of warm milk.

And did you know skim milk and skim-milk products provide more calcium than one-per-cent, two-per-cent and full-fat versions? That's because the calcium is all in the whey or watery part of the milk.

HOLIDAY FOODS that are good for you



With sugary and chocolate-covered temptations of the holidays around every corner at this time of year, it's more typical to be thinking about how to avoid gaining weight than how to gain nutritional benefit from the foods of the season. But there are a number of delights that are well worth loading up on during the holidays.

At the time of year when avoiding or fighting colds and flus is a goal, you can grab a mandarin orange or enjoy cranberries in just about any form—from sauce to dried or sprinkled on a salad—for added vitamin C. Yams, brussels sprouts, pomegranates along with the oranges and cranberries all provide health-enhancing fibre in addition to vitamins and minerals.

Often thought of purely as treats, a few other foods with nutritional benefits include dark chocolate—the higher percentage of cocoa, the better. A good quality cocoa or cacao mixed with dairy or almond milk into a hot chocolate is also nourishing. Cinnamon and ginger, in the form of a chai tea or alcohol-free punch or cider, are healthy flavours of the season to enjoy.

In the protein department, one of the leanest and highest quality sources going is turkey, but forego the crispy skin, which is high in fat. Roast a big turkey and enjoy the leftovers as a protein boost in salads, soups and sandwiches throughout the week that follows the feast. Walnuts offer protein and brain-boosting nutrients. And although calorically dense, all nuts are great sources of trace minerals and worth enjoying in portion-wise amounts all year round.

"Food is not just eating energy. It's an experience."

—Guy Fieri, restaurateur

Snowshoeing IS MORE THAN JUST FUN

Winter is here, and if you're not into skiing or snowboarding, what else is there?

It's time to wrap up warm, strap on your snowshoes and get outside! Snowshoeing has multiple health and fitness benefits, it provides a great cardio workout, helps build strength, agility, balance and endurance.

According to studies by Ball State University and the University of Vermont, snowshoers can burn between 420-1,000 calories per hour. It's also an activity that is accessible to many, as it is low impact.

For the more athletic, snowshoeing helps keep marathon runners, endurance racers, hikers, and cyclists fit during the winter months.

The muscles you use are similar to those used when walking and hiking hilly terrain. Hip flexors may receive more of a workout and quads may get more exercise than usual due to the lifting motion of each step.

"Snowshoeing is easy to learn and provides excellent low impact cardio exercise. The equipment is affordable, ultramodern, lightweight and easy to use," says David Robinson, president at Snowshoe Canada.



Not One Size Fits Ball

A fitness or stability ball provides an inexpensive, fun and effective way to strengthen and condition the whole body, particularly the core mid-body muscles. In fact, used passively as a chair, it can help to improve flexibility and balance.

Fitness balls are available in a variety of sizes. When choosing a ball, select the size that allows your knees to be at a right angle when you sit on the ball with feet on the floor.

Typically, exercisers between five feet and five feet six inches in height should choose a 22-inch ball. Those between five feet seven inches and six feet tall require a 25-inch ball.

And people over six feet tall may find a 30-inch ball works best for them.

When starting out, keep in mind that exercises are more difficult on a firmer ball. Vary the ball's air pressure to suit your level of fitness. Novice exercisers may want to keep the ball slightly deflated at first and inflate it as you gain strength and confidence.

If you struggle with balance, have someone assist you with exercises. Move slowly and avoid making quick movement changes. Stability balls may appear to provide an easy workout, but they work your core more than you think, especially if you're new to exercise.

"If you get tired learn to rest, not to quit."

—Banksy, artist

Piriformis Syndrome



Common in endurance athletes like runners and cyclists, piriformis syndrome occurs when the piriformis muscle, located deep in the buttocks, is tight, inflamed, and has a trigger point that refers pain down the back of the thigh. "This often results in impingement of the sciatic nerve and can cause radiating pain down the back of the leg," says Dr. Aaron Case, a Vancouver-based chiropractor and Active Release Techniques (ART) therapist.

While the causes of piriformis syndrome vary, according to Dr. Case, it's commonly caused by "overuse due to compensation for underuse of other hip and gluteal muscles, or tightness of the inner leg muscles putting extra load on the piriformis."

Since piriformis syndrome can be confused with a disc bulge, lower back and spinal problems

or a hamstring strain, Dr. Case recommends reviewing your symptom history with a practitioner. This may be followed by range of motion testing and orthopedic tests of the lower back, leg, and hip.

To treat the injury, Dr. Case recommends stretching, foam rolling, massage, Active or Myofascial Release, and needling, depending on the severity of the case. Most importantly, however, patients should include active treatment to strengthen the hip stability muscles.

To prevent piriformis syndrome, Dr. Case encourages athletes to take "down weeks," replace regular training with occasional cross training and include resistance training and stretching for the hip. A gradual increase in strength training is also important.

Called TO THE BAR

If you haven't yet heard about The Bar Method, you will. It's the newest workout buzzword in Canada.

The original Bar Method can be traced back to the 1930s when a ballerina named Lotte Berk suffered a back injury. Berk developed an intense strengthening and stretching program that combined the ballet bar routines she practised as a dancer with therapeutic exercises to assist in her recovery.

"Today, The Bar Method has spun off from that and brought with it more physical therapy aspects. In fact, we have many clients who are physios or people who have existing injuries who need to work on

strengthening muscles," says Carolyn Williams, owner of The Bar Method in Vancouver. "I like to think of it as interval training that uses your body's own resistance to strengthen, tone and stretch the muscles."

In that sense, it's similar to yoga and Pilates, but unlike those forms of exercise, the classes also incorporate light weights, a bar and music.

Another reason The Bar Method has become so popular is because it caters to people of all ages and can complement other forms of training. "I started going to The Bar Method in 2007 with my mom," Williams recalls. "She was 60 and I was 29. My background before that was in marathon



running, so I found this a new type of challenge. With The Bar Method I was able to take 10 minutes off my marathon time. You learn how to manipulate

your body. For me, there is no comparable exercise that strengthens the muscles, provides stability and keeps you engaged."

"Fitness is like a marriage: you can't cheat and expect it to work."

—Anonymous

Take Control of **ANGER**



Anger is designed to be healthy – it’s an alert system that tells you when something is not right in your world. But the emotion becomes alienating and unhealthy when expressed in ways that are harmful: anything from venting frustration to yelling, knocking things over or even starting fights.

“Thoughts of having to win, to be right, and memories of previous conflicts are just a few of the thought patterns that can lead to explosive anger,” says Jim Snyder, a therapeutic anger management facilitator with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). “A good way to know if you have an anger problem is by noticing how others react – fear and avoidance are strong signals.”

Snyder says that while some may cling to the belief that outbursts are a natural and normal reaction to provocation, adults can always learn to cope with and express anger in healthier ways.

These tips from *Here to Help* – a public awareness program from the CMHA – are a few first steps for those struggling with the conflict and isolation that can result from unmanaged anger-driven behaviour.

TIPS

Relax: Learn skills like breath awareness, counting to 10, or finding humour in the situation.

Change your mind: When you’re heating up, stop to examine your own thought processes. Can you disrupt familiar patterns?

Reach out: Empathy is anger’s opposite. Try imagining the other person’s viewpoint.

Stand tall: Assertiveness is different from anger. Instead of bottling up, communicate your desires with respect and understanding. You may be surprised at the positive response.



A Helping Hand

Studies have shown that volunteering helps people feel more socially connected, boosts self-esteem and wards off loneliness and depression.

People who help others are said to experience a “helper’s high” – a euphoric rush that releases endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers. Volunteering can also give you a general feeling of calm and well-being, as well as stabilize your mood and increase your ability to manage stress.

Volunteering among seniors in Canada has been linked to improved quality of life, stronger social networks, increased levels of physical activity and lower mortality rates.

If you are considering volunteering, here are some tips:

- Choose a cause that is important to you as you will find it easier to honour your commitment if it fits in well with your routine and your lifestyle.
- Understand that volunteering allows you to take advantage of the opportunity to do the things that your current profession may not afford you the luxury of exploring.
- Set realistic objectives for yourself. This includes how much time you actually have to devote to a cause.
- Set aside time to take care of yourself.

For information on volunteering visit volunteerbc.bc.ca.

“We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves.”

—Dalai Lama, spiritual leader

The Emotional Side of Infertility

One out of every six couples in Canada experiences infertility – and for those attempting treatment or adoption, the stresses reach beyond the financial and physical. *Wellness Matters* spoke with three Vancouver-area fertility counsellors about the emotional side of this struggle, and how infertile couples can find strength and support.

Align Your Thinking

Couples who are not united in their perspectives can face major turmoil, say Karin Schwartz and Janna Stark Glassman of New Origins Counselling. “If one is not ready, or wants to stop trying, and the other wants to continue, resentment can build up,” says Schwartz. “That’s where [counsellors] come in, to help them align what they’re experiencing.”



Nurture Your Intimacy

Fertility treatment or adoption can be all-consuming, says Holly Yager of Holly Yager Reproductive Health & Fertility Counselling. She recommends setting aside time to rediscover common interests and foster emotional intimacy. “Find time to have conversations that are about anything but fertility,” she suggests.

Be Open

Although they grapple with sadness, anger, guilt or grief, many stay silent for fear of adding to a partner’s burden, says Yager. “No one can know what you need until you tell them,” she says. “Communication

is the first thing. You went in as a team – remember to work as a team.”

Find a Community

Infertility can be isolating in a world full of strollers and baby showers, so it’s important to seek out connections with people who understand, says Janna Stark Glassman. Fertility clinics or the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada can direct you to a local support group. Glassman says to be wary of online forums, however, where stories of both successes and challenges can be highly charged. “You can be really carried away with what you read,” she says.

Extreme Healthy Eating



Eating well is a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle but healthy eating can be taken to the extreme. Orthorexia nervosa is a non-medical term used to describe an obsession with eating the right foods.

Dr. Steven Bratman, author of *Health Food Junkies: Orthorexia Nervosa, Overcoming the Obsession with Healthful Eating*, coined the term in 1996.

In an article for *Yoga Journal*, he explained how it starts out innocently enough: people may start to eat a healthy, balanced, mostly plant-based diet to improve their health. But eating healthily becomes a fixation, with people spending most of their time planning, purchasing, and eating wholesome meals.

“The challenge in identifying the illness relates to the fact that sufferers believe they are simply practising healthy eating,” says registered social worker Esther Kane, author of *It’s Not about the Food: A Woman’s Guide to Making Peace with Food and Our Bodies*.

Symptoms of orthorexia include the elimination of entire food groups in an attempt to have a “clean” or “perfect” diet; severe anxiety about how food is prepared; and avoidance of social events involving food for fear of being unable to comply with an “ideal” diet, according to Eating Disorder Hope. People with the condition might also be critical of those who don’t follow such strict diets.

A practitioner or centre specializing in treating eating disorders can help someone overcome an unhealthy obsession with healthy food.

“There is a voice that doesn’t use words. Listen.”

—Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, poet

Do your extended health benefits include massage therapy? If so, and you aren't taking advantage of this benefit, you may be missing out on an opportunity to reduce stress, pain and muscle tension, while improving posture.

A referral or prescription is not usually required to visit a Registered Massage Therapist (RMT). Massage can be used to treat both acute (sudden) and chronic (ongoing) conditions. For example, some people may visit an RMT for a short while after an accident or injury, while others may require longer-term care if they are being treated for an illness or disability such as arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome.



Get the Massage!

During a massage, you can expect the RMT to manipulate your soft tissues – generally your muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. Some people worry that massage may cause them more pain, but the RMT will discuss any treatments with you first and

will modify their techniques if they are causing you pain. Other people may be concerned that they will have to remove all of their clothing for massage therapy; an RMT is concerned about your comfort and ability to relax, so they will ensure that your privacy is respected

by using proper draping techniques or respecting your decision not to remove your clothes.

It is very important to stay hydrated throughout the process, as your kidneys require water to process the increased metabolic waste

generated by the massage. If you are like many people and don't like to drink a whole glass of water, carry a bottle with you wherever you go, and sip regularly. Remember that any non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic beverage can be hydrating too!

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